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Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response

Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Support for HB 2502, HB 2929, HB 3321, and HB 3375 – Because Our Kids Deserve Better

Dear Co-Chairs Prozanski and Kropf, and Members of the Joint Committee On Addiction and Community Safety Response,

Every parent thinks they have more time. I thought I did. My son, Tyson Richardson, was 18 years old when he took a pill he thought was safe. It wasn't. It had fentanyl in it, and that single mistake cost him his life.

Tyson wasn't a chronic user. He wasn't someone society would label an addict. He was a son, a friend, a kid with dreams. He was supposed to grow up. But he didn't get that chance because no one warned him about how deadly fentanyl could be—not at school, not in any prevention program, and not in a way that reached him before it was too late.

We need real prevention in middle and high schools—not vague messaging, not outdated drug education, but real conversations, real interventions, and real access to help before kids end up in crisis. Schools should be a frontline defense, catching at-risk kids early and steering them toward support instead of waiting until it's too late. Right now, those resources don't exist in most Oregon schools.

I'm asking you to support **HB 2502, HB 2929, HB 3321, and HB 3375**—four bills that could start to fix this broken system. But passing them isn't enough. They need to be stronger, implemented faster, and backed by real accountability so that they don't just sit on paper while more kids die.

HB 2502: Schools Must Step Up

Why I support it: Schools are in a unique position to recognize substance use early, intervene, and connect students with treatment before it's too late. Right now, many schools have no structured prevention, no dedicated staff to address substance use, and no clear plan for intervention.

HB 2502 is a start—it focuses on prevention, screening, and intervention programs in schools. But if we want to stop this crisis, it needs to be stronger.

What will actually make a difference?

1. **Dedicated funding for school-based prevention specialists**—not just counselors who are already stretched too thin.

2. **Immediate access to Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)** for teens who need it, instead of weeks-long waitlists.
3. **Sober housing for teens in recovery**—because sending them back to the same environment is setting them up to fail.
4. **Parental education programs** so families know what signs to look for and where to turn for help.
5. **Mandatory fentanyl education in every middle and high school**, using real-world campaigns like Song for Charlie and One Pill Can Kill.

Local groups like *Oregon City Together* are already making an impact with community-led prevention programs. Why aren't we funding programs like this statewide?

HB 2929: Hold People Accountable

Why I support it: Oregon has spent millions on addiction treatment and prevention, but we have little to show for it. The current system lacks oversight, leaving money tied up in ineffective programs, administrative waste, and bureaucratic red tape. Meanwhile, families are left scrambling to find help.

HB 2929 would restructure the Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission (ADPC) to improve oversight. That's necessary—but if there's no accountability, it's just another bureaucracy.

What needs to be in this bill?

1. **Public reporting on outcomes**—where is the money going, and is it working?
2. **A real-time database of available treatment beds** so families and first responders don't have to waste time calling dozens of places.
3. **Strict audits on state-funded programs** to ensure money isn't wasted. If fraud is found, require a forensic audit.
4. **A seat at the table for families who've lost loved ones**, not just politicians and agency heads.
5. **Real consequences for failure.** If state-funded programs don't meet clear, measurable goals, their funding should be pulled. Period.

People's lives are on the line. We can't afford to keep throwing money at programs that aren't working.

HB 3321: Prevention Has to Be More Than a Buzzword

Why I support it: Oregon is in a crisis, but we're still treating prevention like an afterthought. Fentanyl is now the leading cause of death for young people, yet we have no statewide plan to reach them before they experiment with drugs. Kids don't just wake up one day and decide to try fentanyl—many start with vaping, alcohol, or prescription pills. If we can intervene early, we can save lives.

HB 3321 lays the groundwork for a statewide prevention strategy, but we need to ensure it leads to real, measurable action.

Here's how to actually make prevention work:

1. **Statewide fentanyl awareness campaigns**—like we did with anti-smoking and drunk driving ads.

2. **Mental health support in schools**, because untreated anxiety, trauma, and depression are where substance use starts.
3. **Narcan in every school and public space**, with training for staff and students.
4. **Peer recovery programs in schools**, because teens listen to each other more than they listen to adults.
5. **Incentives for local businesses to fund after-school programs**—keep kids engaged, and they'll stay out of trouble.

We know what works—we just need to actually fund and implement it.

HB 3375: Stop Talking About Treatment Gaps and Start Fixing Them

Why I support it: Oregon doesn't have enough detox beds, treatment facilities, or sober living spaces. That's not an opinion—it's a fact. Families in crisis are being told to wait weeks or even months for help, and by then, it's often too late.

HB 3375 aims to assess and address these gaps, but we don't need more reports—we need real solutions now.

What we need is action:

1. **Increase treatment beds immediately.** Not next year. Not after another study. Now.
2. **Give outreach workers and first responders the authority to place people directly into treatment.** No more waiting for insurance approval or paperwork delays.
3. **Expand sober living and transitional housing**, so people leaving treatment don't end up right back on the streets.
4. **A centralized intake system** so families and first responders can find available beds instantly.
5. **Expand MAT in schools and juvenile justice programs**, because medication-assisted treatment saves lives.

Enough Studies. Enough Delays. Enough Deaths.

My son Tyson should still be here. He had plans. He had people who loved him. But fentanyl stole his future, and now all I can do is fight to stop this from happening to other families.

How many more parents have to stand over their child's casket before we act?

The time for talking is over. We don't need more research. We don't need more excuses. We need action.

Here's what that means:

- Fully fund school-based prevention and intervention now.
- Expand access to treatment and recovery services now.
- Hold agencies and programs accountable for results now.
- Get this legislation implemented now.

Don't let another family go through what mine has. You have the power to change this. Do it.

Sincerely,

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